

**Project EASI/ED
Cost/Benefit Analysis Report
for the
U.S. Department of Education**



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FINAL

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Project EASI (Easy Access for Students and Institutions) is an effort by members of the postsecondary education community to define and to implement a customer-focused "system" to support postsecondary education. The specific focus of Project EASI is on those processes and systems with which students, prospective students, and their families most directly interact. Within Project EASI, Project EASI/ED represents ED's initial effort to implement the Project EASI vision within the scope of its business processes and systems. ED's focus is on reengineering the 16 financial aid delivery systems and associated processes used to manage and deliver postsecondary student financial aid authorized under Title IV of the Higher Education Act of 1965, as amended.

The *Project EASI/ED Cost/Benefit Analysis (C/BA) Report* describes the initial analysis of estimated relative costs and benefits of the Project EASI/ED requirements, as documented in the *Project EASI/ED Business Area Requirements Document (BARD)* (July 1997), in comparison to the current Title IV systems. This analysis is intended to provide ED and Project EASI managers information they can use as part of their continuing evaluation of Project EASI/ED, and to provide a basis for making decisions regarding which Project EASI/ED requirements to move forward and which requirements to re-examine.

Later in the system development cycle, as ED prepares to undertake implementation of specific functionality, the Project EASI/ED cost/benefit analysis will be updated to reflect an assessment of specific options being considered. For example, at the time that the disbursement functionality of Project EASI/ED is to be implemented, a cost/benefit analysis for this specific area will be performed that focuses on physical implementation options for this functionality. This might include outsourcing the function to a credit card provider, using a commercial-off-the-shelf (COTS) software solution, developing new software to serve this purpose, and so on. The anticipated costs and benefits of each of these alternatives will be evaluated in relation to the current system and to each other as a basis for deciding which acquisition path to follow for this functionality.

The analysis in the *Project EASI/ED C/BA Report* occurs at the level of 22 "functions" that are defined by aggregating the Project EASI/ED requirements presented in the *Project EASI/ED BARD*. Together, these functions represent all Project EASI/ED functionality.

Five evaluation criteria were defined and used to assess the benefit provided by each Project EASI/ED function in comparison with the current systems. The five evaluation criteria are as follows:

- **Information Resource** is the degree to which all relevant information from all applicable sources is available, accessible, and secure, from a single point of interface, in support of postsecondary education organizations and customers throughout all phases of the postsecondary education life cycle.
- **Customer Service** is the degree to which user's needs for services are met throughout all phases of the postsecondary education life cycle.
- **Student Financial Aid Delivery Processes** is the degree to which student financial aid delivery processes and associated data are standardized and integrated throughout all phases of the postsecondary education life cycle.
- **Program Management and Integrity** is the degree to which program management of postsecondary education information is supported and the integrity of that information throughout all phases of the postsecondary education life cycle.
- **NPV Costs Savings** is the measure of NPV cost savings associated with functional operation, maintenance, and enhancement activities.

These evaluation criteria were weighted in relation to each other by ED staff based on the relative importance of each criterion. The relative importance of each criterion, expressed as a percentage, is shown below.

CRITERION	Relative Importance
Information Resource (INFORES)	30%
Customer Service (CUSTSERV)	12%
Student Financial Aid Delivery Processes (SFADP)	34%
Program Management and Integrity (PMI)	17%
NPV Cost Savings (COSTSAV)	7%

Criteria Relative Importance

Using the cost data that was provided by ED staff, cost/benefit analysts allocated costs across the 22 functions of the current systems and Project EASI/ED. Cost figures were calculated assuming an 8 year system life-span for Project EASI/ED from FY2000 to FY2007, using cost categories defined in the Federal Information Processing Standards Publication 64 document. Current system costs were compared to Project EASI/ED costs, and for the most part current systems costs were higher for both Life-Cycle Costs (LCC) and Net Present Value (NPV). Project EASI/ED has a NPV of \$1,492,104,772 where the current systems' NPV is \$2,364,703,704. Project EASI/ED shows a 36.9% reduction in NPV, with an estimated NPV cost savings of \$872,598,932. For operational life-cycle costs, Project EASI/ED shows \$2,567,382,109 compared to current systems' costs of \$3,928,136,066, a reduction of 34.6%.

Analysts then reviewed the benefits that would accrue through the implementation of Project EASI/ED and quantified these where possible. These NPV quantifiable cost savings totaled \$1,716,490,966. Both savings and accrued benefits were totaled to determine each function's score for the NPV cost savings evaluation criterion.

The 22 Project EASI/ED functions were evaluated against the other four criteria based on the requirements that would be implemented within those functions.

Criteria weightings were applied to the scores for the 22 functions to arrive at the weighted scores as listed below, where the 22 project EASI/ED functions are listed in descending order of their weighted score.

		30%	12%	34%	17%	7%	
Function Number	Target Areas and Functions	Information Resource	Customer Service	Student Financial Aid Delivery	Program Management and Integrity	NPV Cost Savings	Weighted Score
1	Interactive Student and Aid Organization Accounts	1.50	0.60	1.02	0.51	0.21	3.84
14	Enrollment Tracking and Reporting	1.50	0.60	1.02	0.51	0.21	3.84
21	Program Data and Performance Information Management	1.50	0.36	1.02	0.51	0.21	3.60
22	Integrated Accounting Management	1.50	0.36	1.02	0.51	0.21	3.60
19	School Eligibility and Data Maintenance	0.90	0.36	1.02	0.85	0.35	3.48
2	Interactive Application Processing and Renewal	0.90	0.60	1.02	0.51	0.35	3.38
17	Repayment Maintenance	0.90	0.60	1.02	0.51	0.35	3.38
20	Guarantor and Lender Information Maintenance	0.90	0.36	1.02	0.85	0.07	3.20
5	Common Aid Origination	0.90	0.36	1.02	0.51	0.35	3.14
9	Disseminate School Disbursement Information	0.90	0.36	1.02	0.51	0.21	3.00
13	Consolidation Processing	0.90	0.36	1.02	0.51	0.21	3.00
18	Defaulted Debt Collection	0.90	0.36	1.02	0.51	0.21	3.00
16	Customer Service Management	0.90	0.60	1.02	0.17	0.21	2.90
8	Invoice and Schedule Disbursement Authorization	0.90	0.36	1.02	0.51	0.07	2.86
12	State Authorization Management	0.90	0.36	1.02	0.51	0.07	2.86
6	Interactive Participant Disbursement Authorization	0.30	0.36	1.02	0.51	0.07	2.26
11	Fund Source Disbursement	0.30	0.36	1.02	0.51	0.07	2.26
3	Pre-Enrollment Financial Aid Simulation Modeling	0.90	0.60	0.34	0.17	0.07	2.08
15	Repayment Option Modeling and Selection/Repayment Counseling	0.90	0.60	0.34	0.17	0.07	2.08
7	Draw Down School Disbursement Authorization	0.30	0.12	1.02	0.17	0.35	1.96
10	Perform Draw Down Reconciliation	0.90	0.12	0.34	0.17	0.21	1.74
4	Multi-Year Promissory Note Processing	0.30	0.12	1.02	0.17	0.07	1.68

Project EASI/ED Function Weighted Scores

When the relative weightings of the five evaluation criteria are varied several functions evaluate well in all circumstances. These functions are shown below:

- Enrollment Tracking and Reporting
- Integrated Accounting Management
- Interactive Application Processing and Renewal
- Interactive Student and Aid Organization Accounts
- Program Data and Performance Information Management
- Repayment Maintenance
- School Eligibility and Data Maintenance

The interactive student and aid organization accounts, integrated accounting management, and program data and performance information management functions represent critical infrastructure areas for Project EASI/ED. The interactive student and aid organization accounts provide seamless, integrated access to data. Problems related to data redundancy and inconsistency, as well as problems related to inadequate access to information for postsecondary education community members, are substantially reduced. The integrated accounting management function gives ED a centralized accounting capability, with much more visibility into Department receipts, expenditures, and financial controls. The program data and performance information management function provides all community members, but particularly those with program management responsibilities, information on the performance of community members in meeting their performance goals and complying with program rules. This should not only improve program oversight by ED - it should also allow schools, lenders, and other organizations to benchmark themselves and institute their own improvement initiatives.

The other high-scoring functions represent key activities within Project EASI/ED. Applying for aid, reporting on enrollment status, repaying loans, and maintaining current data on schools are all integral to a successful financial aid delivery process.

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